

MINUTES
SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 27, 2021

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Vick, Vice Chairman Johnson, Senators Bair, Heider, Patrick, Guthrie, Burtenshaw, Stennett, and Rabe

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Vick** called the meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) to order at 1:30 p.m.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENTS: **Chairman Vick** welcomed the three gubernatorial appointees to the Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) Commission and asked that they respond as to why they would like to become a Commissioner.

First to speak was Don Ebert of Weippe, Idaho. **Mr. Ebert** said he has lived in Clearwater County for 59 years and has dedicated much of his life to public service. Mr. Ebert served for 16 years as a County Commissioner, for 10 years as a Joint School District 171 Trustee member, Weippe City Councilman, a member of the Clearwater County Free Library District, and the Clearwater Basin Collaborative. He attended Lewis-Clark State College and graduated with a business administration degree.

Mr. Ebert stated that he grew up hunting, not for trophies, but for food and with that background, he feels he can contribute his experiences and knowledge for the benefit of the Commission.

Vice Chairman Johnson said he has known Mr. Ebert for several years and has had the opportunity to work with him on different issues. He is a committed individual and has served the residents of his part of the state faithfully the Senator said. **Vice Chairman Johnson** indicated that Mr. Ebert would make a positive contribution to the Commission and appreciates that he has stepped forward.

Senator Heider inquired about the game in the Clearwater area and the sportsmen. **Mr. Ebert** replied the elk seem plentiful, living in the wheat fields. As for the sportsmen, they seem to view the IDFG favorably; however, there are some who receive misinformation. **Mr. Ebert** sees his role as a listener who should take their concerns seriously.

Senator Patrick asked about depredation and wanted to know Mr. Ebert's opinion regarding it. **Mr. Ebert** said depredation is a big challenge and sometimes the elk are in the wrong place and a lot of claims have been paid. He wants to hear reports from the IDFG as to how well the program is working and measure its effectiveness.

Chairman Vick said he noted that Mr. Ebert did not belong to any sportsmen's groups. **Mr. Ebert** said he hadn't felt the need to join as he hunts on his own property. However, he does support them and their causes. **Chairman Vick** then asked about his favorite sportsman activity. **Mr. Ebert** replied that he enjoys sitting and watching wildlife in their natural surroundings and wishes everyone could have that experience.

Chairman Vick called on Gregory Cameron of Rupert, Idaho, to tell the Committee why he would like to be reappointed to the position of Commissioner. **Mr. Cameron** said he has enjoyed serving as a Commissioner the past four years and would like to continue. His father and grandfathers introduced him to archery hunting and fly-fishing, and he has passed that on to his children and grandchildren. **Mr. Cameron** stated that his goal is to keep Idaho like it has been so that future generations can enjoy it.

Senator Heider posed two questions to Mr. Cameron. 1) How often does he communicate with the sportsmen in his area as to what the Commission is doing and 2) What is going on relative to the hunting and fishing opportunities in Southern Idaho. **Mr. Cameron** said he talks to anyone that calls him and he tries to help them with their concerns. Also, he attends public meetings, IDFG meetings, and landowner meetings.

Senator Stennett commended Mr. Cameron for the great job he is doing in her district and said she appreciates his availability. She then discussed trapping and the need for more education regarding it. With places like the Boise Foothills, Sun Valley, and McCall experiencing massive multiuse development growth, Senator Stennett is afraid someone will get hurt and there will be lawsuits which the state or the IDFG Commission does not need.

Senator Stennett related an incident regarding her dog being caught in a trap next to a trail on which they were walking. The trap was anchored in the frozen ground and there were no markings or identification as to whom the trap belonged. After several hours of agony, two men helped retrieve the dog from the trap. **Senator Stennett** provided the Committee with a detailed report of the incident, saying she hoped that it would bring attention to what can happen when traps are not the proper size or properly placed.

Mr. Cameron agreed that the IDFG Commission could do a better job of educating the public. The Committee discussed signage, as well as consequences for trappers not obeying the law.

Senator Burtenshaw asked for an explanation of being a Commissioner as a "dream job." **Mr. Cameron** said he has a passion for wildlife and sportsmen activities. There is nothing else he would rather do than to work with the public regarding hunting and fishing, Mr. Cameron said.

Chairman Vick addressed the depredation problem and inquired as to how it could be improved. **Mr. Cameron** said the Commission works on depredation problems continually and every depredation issue is different. A lot of money has been put into the program and it can always be improved, he said. Several years ago, there was a big problem in the Bellevue area and fences were installed around the haystacks. When the elk couldn't get to the hay, they moved on and spent the winter elsewhere.

Chairman Vick called on Ron Davies of Clayton, Idaho, to tell the Committee why he wants to serve on the IDFG Commission. **Mr. Davies** said he served as the Pocatello Fire Department Battalion Chief and was president of the Professional Fire Fighters of Idaho. He has a successful track record of leading different organizations for getting people to work together as a team and focus on a common goal. **Mr. Davies** indicated in his biography that he is poised and confident under pressure and able to make good decisions in adverse conditions.

Senator Stennett said she wanted to thank Mr. Davies as a first responder for all the good work he has done. She is pleased that he has a passion for wanting to live in Clayton.

Senator Patrick asked if there are better ways to control depredation than what has been done (shooting the game). He also asked Mr. Davies about trapping. **Mr. Davies** responded by saying he is trying to become educated with all the tools that IDFG uses in the depredation problem. There is a fine line between keeping the amount of game that all the sportsmen want and the needs of the agricultural community, Mr. Davies said. Mr. Davies said knowledge of trapping is his biggest weakness.

Senator Guthrie said, in the spirit of disclosure, he has known Mr. Davies and his wife for a good number of years, and her family for his whole life. He then asked Mr. Davies if there was an aha moment that made him want to seek the appointment.

Mr. Davies said that after being a public servant for 26 years, he missed the interaction with the people. He also has a passion for hunting and fishing.

Senator Guthrie then asked what skill set he might bring to the Commission.

Mr. Davies replied that the tools he would bring to the Commission would be leadership skills.

Senator Stennett inquired as to how the public can be educated about the diverse ways to use the landscape. **Mr. Davies** agreed that education is needed, especially regarding traps. As to the increase in use by the public, he feels the covid -19 pandemic has had an effect on it.

Senator Heider said the main responsibility of a Commissioner is to communicate with the constituents they represent, and with the background that Mr. Davies has, he thinks Mr. Davies will make a good Commissioner.

Chairman Vick thanked the three gubernatorial appointees for appearing before the Committee and said he is impressed with the caliber of the gentlemen and that voting will take place at the next meeting.

**PASSED THE
GAVEL:**

Chairman Vick passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Johnson.

**DOCKET NO.
13-0116-2002**

The Trapping of Predatory and Unprotected Wildlife and the Taking of Furbearing Animals. **Vice Chairman Johnson** asked Paul Kline, Deputy Director, IDFG, to briefly provide a summary regarding the discussion of **Docket No 13-0116-2002** that was held on January 25, 2021. **Mr. Kline** said the first part of the rulemaking was establishing restrictions on the use of body-grip traps, which was brought to the IDFG Commission by petition from the Idaho Trappers Association. Part two simplifies language associated with the use of bait for trapping furbearing predatory and unprotected wildlife. That was also brought to the Commission by petition from the Idaho Trappers Association.

Vice Chairman Johnson also asked for a review of the discussion relating to body-grip traps. **Mr. Kline** said trappers want to restrict the size of the diameter in traps. The purpose is to restrict the possibility of unintentional catches of larger animals. Part of the rule that was questioned was the size of the trap's diameter. A recommendation was made that the diameter be less than 7 inches.

TESTIMONY:

Jonathan Oppenheimer, External Relations Director, Idaho Conservation League (ICL), testified via Zoom. He said the ICL has been involved with the development of these rules. In 2019, ICL supported the change that expanded the set back from maintained, unpaved public trails from 5 to 10 feet. ICL had some concerns with that and the discussion today really drives home those continued areas of conflict with regards to traffic along recreational trails. There is not a set back from roads, just a set back from the maintained traveled portion of the roadway and the shoulders. **Mr. Oppenheimer** said he sees opportunities to try to address some of the concerns and ongoing conflicts and looks forward to working with IDFG and other interested stakeholders over the interim to see if improvements can be made both for protection of trappers as well as for the recreational public.

MOTION:

Senator Guthrie moved to approve **Docket No. 13-0116-2002**. **Senator Burtenshaw** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**PASSED THE
GAVEL:**

Vice Chairman Johnson passed the gavel to Chairman Vick.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Vick** adjourned the meeting at 2:35 p.m.

Senator Vick
Chair

Juanita Budell
Secretary